

***Our Confidence in this Life***  
*Galatians 2:15-21*

**Introduction:** Sometimes we are like Jewish Christians in the first century. We are tempted to think, “Yes, I believe that Jesus died for my sins and rose again on the third day, but what really matters day-to-day is what I do.” If we’re not careful, our confidence in this life can shift from Jesus’ death and resurrection to our good behavior. This is usually a subtle shift. Instead of having a God-centered life in which we “fix our eyes on Jesus” (Heb.12:2), we have a self-centered life in which we fix our eyes on ourselves and our ability to keep the “rules”. Our confidence before God becomes dependent on things like: how obedient (or sinful) we’ve been lately, how often we’ve read the Bible, how long we’ve prayed, how much ministry we’ve done lately. As important as these things are, they were never meant to be the basis of our confidence before God. Our confidence is to firmly rest on Jesus alone.

**Opening Discussion:** What were a couple of “rules” you had in your family as you grew up?

**Read Galatians 2:15-21**

1. What is the context of this passage?
2. What does Paul teach about justification?
3. What does Paul teach about the law?
4. What does Paul teach about how he lives life in Christ (v. 20)?

Steve said:

Notice the specific thing about Jesus that stimulated Paul’s faith. Paul wrote, Jesus “loved me and gave Himself up for me.” Do you see how personally Paul interpreted the love of Jesus and the sacrifice of Jesus? There’s a world of difference between the idea that “Jesus loves everybody and died for everybody” and the conviction that “Jesus, God’s very Son, loved **me** and gave Himself up for **me**.”

5. How would it affect you if you more consistently lived with the conviction that Jesus loves **you** and gave Himself up for **you**?

Steve said:

Just as Paul's confidence was no longer in keeping the Law, our confidence is not wrapped up in our obedience, our spiritual disciplines, or our ministry. Our confidence lies in what Jesus accomplished through His death and resurrection. . . . You might have gotten the idea somewhere (through a church, your parents, or just a vague impression) that God puts you on probation until you prove that you're worthy of His acceptance. Paul's point is that if you can earn or deserve God's acceptance by your behavior, Christ died for nothing. If you've come here today thinking that you have to somehow clean yourself up so that God will accept you, please understand that you can't save yourself. You can't get rid of your sin and make yourself acceptable before God. The sooner you quit trying the better. *Jesus died on the cross in your place.* He died as your substitute. He bore your sin so that you can be fully accepted before God.

6. We might not be tempted to turn to the law for our standing before God, however, we too at times are tempted to put our confidence in something other than Jesus' death and resurrection. What things you are tempted to wrongly put your confidence in at times for your standing with God?

Steve said:

Think of an area of obedience that you find difficult. You know what's right, but sometimes (perhaps most of the time) you have a hard doing what's right: loving a disagreeable person, turning away from sexual temptation, forgiving someone who has asked for forgiveness, etc. When dealing with such situations, sometimes we can feel so alone and begin to fix our eyes on ourselves. We think, "If I'm obedient here I'm a good Christian; if I'm disobedient, I'm a bad Christian. God's opinion of me is based on my behavior." Our confidence before God is wrapped up in our own ability to do what's right. But if that were true, Christ died for nothing! If you're a believer in Jesus, you should be able to say with Paul, "I have been crucified with Christ. I am dead to the idea that my behavior is the thing that makes me acceptable to God. My confidence comes from the fact that He lives in me. The life that I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in Jesus – who loved me and gave Himself up for me." . . . When you're wrestling with some area of obedience, living by faith means taking your eyes off of yourself and putting them on Jesus: confident that He will live His life through you (instead of being confident that you're strong enough to do what's right). This week, let's experiment with "living by faith." Identify an area of obedience that you find difficult and ask, "Am I living my life as if Jesus died for nothing? Or am I living by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself up for me?"

7. What is an area of obedience that you find difficult?
8. What might it look like to live by faith in the One who loves you and gave Himself up for you in this area of obedience that you find difficult?
9. How can you take your eyes off yourself in this area and look to Jesus to live His life through you?